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¶ Vietnam: Military activity has picked up following the Christmas standdown, largely as a result of allied efforts to seek out enemy forces. Several sharp ground battles occurred on 26-27 December. Enemy initiated activity was light and confined mainly to stand-off shellings.

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The Communists may be stepping up pressure on the US regarding the transfer of three US prisoners back to US control. A Liberation Radio (Viet Cong) broadcast on 27 December claimed that the meeting on Christmas Day in Tay Ninh Province to arrange the transfer was unproductive because US representatives refused to discuss "procedural matters." The Communists are unlikely to let the matter rest at this point. They may be broadcasting additional "instructions" or proposals in the near future.

The Communists are well aware that the issue of prisoners is an emotional one for the US and they hope this factor will lead the US to accept otherwise unpalatable dealings with the Liberation Front. Their handling of the current problem indicates once again that they consider US prisoners an asset which they can convert to political and propaganda advantage. In the current game, they want clearly established, in fact and in photographs, that US authorities have had to sit down and deal officially with local Communist authorities in South Vietnam. Their larger objective is similar to the one they seek through insisting on an equal place for the National Liberation Front at the conference table in Paris. Through establishing precedents of this kind, they hope to obtain de facto recognition that the Communists, under the name of the Front, have a claim on at least a share of political power in South Vietnam.

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Czechoslovakia-USSR: Yet another ranking Soviet party delegation arrived in Prague yesterday as part of a continuing Russian effort to keep in close touch with Czechoslovak officials during their "normalization" period.

The Russian group, consisting of eight party professionals, is headed by Konstantin Katushev, Soviet central committee secretary for relations with other Communist parties. It also includes first deputy foreign minister Vasily Kuznetsov, who served as Moscow's troubleshooter in Prague after the invasion.

The Dubcek leadership is preparing for the federalization of Czechoslovakia on 1 January. The federative arrangement will divide the country into separate Czech and Slovak republics under a scaled down federal umbrella in Prague. This governmental structure, however, will remain under the control of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, which Dubcek hopes to federalize along similar lines in 1969.

Kuznetsov, in particular, might be concerned with the status of National Assembly President Josef Smrkovsky, who as the leading exponent of liberal reform and an outspoken critic of the Soviet invasion is anathema to Moscow. Several Czechoslovak leaders, including Premier Cernik and Slovak party chief Husak, have implied that Smrkovsky might lose his parliamentary post when the new Federal Assembly is formed later in January. In addition, the Slovak Communist Party has demanded that the next president of parliament be a Slovak.

The Dubcek leadership probably will not strip Smrkovsky of all his party posts, however, if only because of his overwhelming support among the Czechoslovak population. Students, workers, farmers, and intellectuals have threatened demonstrations if Dubcek's reform program is further compromised or if any of the liberals in the leadership, particularly Smrkovsky, are dropped.

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Western Europe: West European nations appear increasingly insistent on a larger voice in disarmament negotiations.

West Germany has made known to the US that it wants to join the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference (ENDC) if the organization is enlarged. Bonn wants the US to raise this question with the Soviets and intends in any case to make its own approach to Moscow after hearing US views on the matter. Although Bonn is willing to haggle over the "price" of its membership, it will balk at admission of East Germany.

The West Germans evidently decided some months ago to seek a greater role in forums dealing with international security. They were prime movers in the Nonnuclear Nations Conference and drafted its non-use of force resolution. They have also sought in recent months to obtain a seat on the International Atomic Energy Agency's board of governors.

Other NATO members are insisting on consultations within the alliance on any plans to enlarge the ENDC. The Dutch argue for inclusion in the ENDC of those countries "interested and qualified and that have something to disarm." Most NATO members believe that Western Europe is underrepresented in the ENDC and should receive strong consideration in any enlargement.

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India: New Delhi is actively seeking ways to improve its image, expand trade, and generally gain more influence in Asia.

India's Asian envoys, during an unusual meeting last week in New Delhi, discussed the entire range of problems for Indian diplomacy in Asia. The main emphasis was on expanding trade. Some attention was given to possible future participation in regional economic groups, but nothing definitive emerged. Although concerned about the future Chinese Communist political and economic role in Southeast Asia, the conferees reiterated India's traditional opposition to military alliances. They took note, however, of India's ability to supply small arms on a commercial basis and to provide military training facilities. It was also reportedly agreed that New Dehli should not "shirk responsibility" if the International Control Commissions in the area are asked to play an expanded role.

Over the past year, New Delhi has shown an increasing interest in East and Southeast Asia. This stems basically from an increasing fear of Chinese Communist intrusion into Southeast Asia combined with the realization that both the US and UK can not be counted on indefinitely to counter the Chinese threat. [redacted]

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Okinawa: The newly elected Okinawan legislature this week unanimously adopted resolutions protesting the presence of B-52s and visits by nuclear submarines; the resolutions will be presented to the Japanese Government by a legislative delegation in January. The passage of the resolutions on the first day of an extraordinary session called to consider the B-52 issue reflects the desire of all Okinawan parties, including the conservatives, to make a clear showing of determination and unity on these two sensitive issues.

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Pakistan: The latest demonstrations in West Pakistan indicate that the antigovernment campaign is being sustained and that violence may increase, despite some slackening during most of December. An effective general strike and large protest march took place in Rawalpindi on 25 December. When a group, including students, converged on a cinema where police had killed two demonstrators in November, the owner ordered his employees to fire on the crowd, and two more persons were killed. A student action committee, which had planned the earlier demonstrations, was to meet on 26 December to discuss possible further courses of action.

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Peru: The military government appears to be actively seeking Latin American backing for its position on the International Petroleum Company (IPC) issue. The Peruvians hope to put pressure on the US to refrain from using economic sanctions against Peru, which has expropriated IPC property, thus far without compensation. Growing nationalistic sentiment in Latin America will probably lead a number of governments to give at least nominal support to Peru.

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